

It is presumed that the male Pied Harrier stayed in the sanctuary throughout the winter. The species was not seen again in the subsequent three years of my stay in the sanctuary.

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May 24, 1986.

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12. DISTRIBUTION OF THE SLENDERBILLED GULL (*LARUS GENEI* BREME) IN THE GULF OF KACHCHH, GUJARAT

There exists no record of the Slenderbilled Gull *Larus genei* Brème from Gujarat, except for a single specimen of this bird collected in Bhavnagar by Dharmakumarsinhji (1955), who considered the bird to be rare on the Saurashtra coast. Ali (1945) does not include it in his list of Kachchh birds. However, south of Gujarat, Navarro (1968) had seen and collected the birds from Bombay (Maharashtra). Sinclair (1976) had also seen the bird in Bombay.

We have seen the bird on a number of occasions in Jamnagar city, and on salt pans and tidal creeks at various places (numbered 1 to 12) around the Gulf of Kachchh. The gull occurred in a variety of situations ranging from freshwater lakes, salt pans, tidal creeks, sea coast and coastal waters (Table 1).

The bird was feeding in a flock at the Salt and Allied Industries (S.A.I.L.), Khijidia (Jamnagar district), where an entire group of about 50 birds swam forward together in a

saltwater reservoir, with the birds in the rear constantly flying to join the main body in the front or on the sides. The resultant feeding commotion caused a few Indian Reef Herons, *Egretta gularis*, to fly and join the gulls in the hope of catching some of the fish for themselves.

The call of the bird was heard only once, at the Hadakiya creek (Surajbari). There, a group of 200 birds was resting on a tidal mudbank along with some Herring Gulls (*Larus argentatus*), Caspian Terns (*Sterna caspia*) and Gullbilled Terns (*Gelochelidon nilotica*). Some of the gulls flew over to a nearby ditch of water, first to bathe in and then stand and preen on the water's edge. The Slenderbilled Gulls were in full breeding plumage, the pink on the breast contrasting well with the white head. They appeared to be thinner than the Herring Gull and stood more erect. They called by stretching their heads outward and upward. The call "caw-caw-caw-

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

TABLE 1

A SUMMARY OF THE SIGHT RECORDS OF SLENDERBILLED GULL DURING 1979-1986

Sr. No.	Location	Habitat type	No. of birds seen	Date	Observer ¹
1	Okha	Sea coast	1	26.iii.86	T.M.
2	Between Salaya and Ajad Island	Coastal waters	1	14.iii.86	T.M.
3	Pirotan Island	Coastal waters	2	25.iv.86	T.M.
4	Jamnagar	Salt pans	1	22.iii.86	T.M.
5	Jamnagar	Lakhota lake (freshwater)	20-25	23.v.79	L.R.
			Few	01.vi.79	L.R.
			Few	31.i.82	L.R.
			Few	30.xii.82	L.R.
6	S.A.I.L. Khijidia	Salt pans	50	27.xii.84	T.M.
7	Balamba	Salt pans	1	27.xii.85	T.M.
8	Surajbari	Creek	130	19.iii.86	T.M.
			200	20.iii.86	T.M.
9	Mundra	Salt pans	3	22.iii.86	T.M.
10	Navinar Light House, Mundra		7	17.iv.86	T.M.
11	Mandvi	Creek	2	27.iv.86	S.V.
12	Narayan Sarovar	Creek	29	16.vi.86	T.M.

¹ T.M. = Taej Mundkur, L.R. = Lalsinh Raol, S.V. = Shantilal Varu.

caw.” repeated 4 to 9 times at a stretch, was similar to that of the other gulls. Many of the birds in this flock spent a great deal of time vocalizing, though the calls did not seem to be directed to any specific bird. Gooders (1979) recorded a laughing “kau-kau” call and another, softer and more plaintive than the Blackheaded Gull *Larus ridibundus*, for the Slenderbilled Gull.

It now appears that the Slenderbilled Gull is a common visitor to our coast. The bird was probably overlooked earlier because of its similarity with the Blackheaded Gull in winter plumage (Ali and Ripley 1983). It is also possible that the bird has now increased in number and hence become more obvious

whereas it was rare and therefore not recorded when this area was surveyed by C. D. Lester, Geoffrey Archer, Salim Ali and others (Ali 1945).

The bird is known to breed in neighbouring Pakistan during May and June (Ali & Ripley 1983). Some of the birds that we saw in March-May, might have been in the process of congregating prior to migration to their nesting area. However, presence of the bird throughout summer (March to June) in the Gulf of Kachchh would indicate that the bird may also be nesting within our limits, or that the non-breeding individuals, though in their breeding plumage, tend to stay over within our limits. Exploration of some of the inland

lakes, such as Chhari Dhandh which is apparently suited for the gull's nesting, during the breeding season is desirable for checking a possible nesting of the bird in India. The marshy areas from Lakhpat to Koteswar and westwards about the Great Rann of Kachchh might similarly prove productive.

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13. AN UNUSUAL FEEDING BEHAVIOUR IN COMMON TERN (*STERNA HIRUNDO*)

In the early morning of 26 March 1986, my Field Assistant and I were cycling down one of the bunds of Mettur Chemicals and Industries Corporation Ltd. at Point Calimere for our regular marine sample collection.

Nearing Reservoir -I, I saw a Common Tern

(*Sterna hirundo*) catching a fish from a puddle, which was present on the right side of the bund, by diving from a height into the water. I stopped pedalling and started watching the bird with my binoculars (8×30). The bird went up with the fish to a height of c. 35 metres